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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/043,277	01/14/2002	Karl-Heinz Baumann	225/50754	4705

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EXAMINER

ROSENBERG, LAURA B

ART UNIT PAPER NUMBER

3616

DATE MAILED: 05/19/2003

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/043,277

Applicant(s)

BAUMANN ET AL.

Examiner

Laura B Rosenberg

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☐ Responsive to communication(s) filed on ____.
- 2a) ☐ This action is FINAL. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-25 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) ____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) ____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-25 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) ____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) ____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☒ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 14 January 2002 is/are: a) ☒ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- 11) ☐ The proposed drawing correction filed on ____ is: a) ☐ approved b) ☐ disapproved by the Examiner.
- If approved, corrected drawings are required in reply to this Office action.
- 12) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

- 13) ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☒ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☒ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. ____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.
- 14) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application).
- a) ☐ The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.
- 15) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) ____.
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). ____.
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: ____.

DETAILED ACTION

Specification

1. The disclosure is objected to because of the following informalities: "Figure 7 shows" should be "Figure 8 shows" (page 9, paragraph 0029). Appropriate correction is required.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

2. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

3. Claims 1-3, 5-9, 15, and 17-20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Seyler (4,700,981). In regards to claim 1, Seyler discloses a vehicle support structure comprised primarily of multi-walled lightweight panels (#10, 11, 111, 211, 211', 311, 311') having plane-parallel side surfaces (best seen in figure 1) with at least one fitting (#14, 114, 214, 314) mountable on the support structure. An opening (#12, 112, 212, 212', 312, 312') is cut out of a lightweight panel in the support structure, the opening being designated for a specific fitting. The fitting can be inserted into this opening such that it covers the opening completely (best seen in figures 7, 8, 17, 24) and a support arrangement (ring and flange on each embodiment; #16, 19 as an example) on the fitting operates in conjunction with an edge of the opening in the lightweight panel to limit insertion of the fitting (best seen in figures 7, 16, 23, 26).

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In regards to claim 2, Seyler discloses the fitting being inserted into a lightweight panel that limits passenger space inside a vehicle (best seen in figure 1).

In regards to claim 3, Seyler discloses the fitting being inserted into the lightweight panel of a support box (best seen in figure 1), the support box being comprised of a base area (#11 and bottom portion of #13), a front wall (wall to the upper left in figure 1 near reference #10), and a panel arrangement that limits front leg room area at the sides and above (front leg room can be seen near front wall in figure 1).

In regards to claim 5, Seyler discloses the support arrangement of the fitting comprising a mounting flange (#19, 119, 219, 319), which serves to reinforce the lightweight panel in the area around the opening.

In regards to claim 6, Seyler discloses the cross section of the opening being designed to accommodate a penetrating cross section of the fitting (best seen in figures 7, 16, 23, 26).

In regards to claim 7, Seyler discloses the fitting being fastened to the lightweight panel via the support arrangement (best seen in figures 7, 9, 17, 24).

In regards to claims 8 and 18, Seyler discloses the support arrangement being fastened to the lightweight panel via an adhesive bond (column 5, line 67-column 6, line 3; column 7, lines 65-68).

In regards to claims 9 and 19, Seyler discloses the fitting being held in place in its contact position on then lightweight panel via a ring flange (#16, 116, 216, 316), the ring flange being slid over the end of the fitting that protrudes through the opening (best seen in figures 2 and 8) and is supported at the edge of the opening against the side

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surface of the lightweight panel that faces the support arrangement (best seen in figures 7, 16, 23, 26).

In regards to claims 15 and 17, Seyler discloses a passenger vehicle assembly comprising a plurality of planar lightweight panels (#10, 11, 111, 211, 211', 311, 311') of multi-wall sandwich honeycomb construction connected together to form a passenger space section bounded by the panels, one of the panels having an opening (#12, 112, 212, 212', 312, 312') with a predetermined shape and size and a fitting (#14, 114, 214, 314) operable to support a vehicle device, the fitting being carried by the panel. The fitting has a flange (#19, 119, 219, 319) adjacent an insertion portion (#17, 117, 217, 317) with a predetermined shape and size corresponding to the opening in the panel to accommodate insertion of the fitting in the opening with the flange limiting the insertion movement of the fitting and forming a support surface for fixing the fitting to the panel (best seen in figures 7, 16, 23, 26).

In regards to claim 20, Seyler discloses the flange (#19, 119, 219, 319) being operable to reinforce the panel (#10, 11, 111, 211, 211', 311, 311') around the opening (#12, 112, 212, 212', 312, 312'). Specifically, the location of the flange against the panel acts to reinforce the panel around the opening.

4. Claims 1, 4-7, 9, 15-17, 19, and 20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Leslie (3,606,446). In regards to claim 1, Leslie discloses a vehicle support structure comprised primarily of multi-walled lightweight panels (#14, 16, 18) having plane-parallel side surfaces (#18 would be plane parallel with a similar panel on

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the opposite side of the vehicle, not shown) with at least one fitting (#40, 60) mountable on the support structure. An opening (#30) is cut out of a lightweight panel in the support structure, the opening being designated for a specific fitting (column 2, lines 31-35). The fitting can be inserted into this opening such that it covers the opening completely (best seen in figures 2, 4) and a support arrangement (#42, 50, 66) on the fitting operates in conjunction with an edge of the opening in the lightweight panel to limit insertion of the fitting (best seen in figures 2, 4).

In regards to claims 4 and 16, Leslie discloses the lightweight panel that is equipped with the fitting being covered by an outer plating unit (#12) with the fitting projecting into a space between the lightweight panel and the plating unit (column 2, lines 23-26).

In regards to claim 5, Leslie discloses the support arrangement of the fitting comprising a mounting flange (#50, 66), which serves to reinforce the lightweight panel in the area around the opening.

In regards to claim 6, Leslie discloses the cross section of the opening being designed to accommodate a penetrating cross section of the fitting (best seen in figure 2, 4).

In regards to claim 7, Leslie discloses the fitting being fastened to the lightweight panel via the support arrangement (best seen in figures 2, 4).

In regards to claims 9 and 19, Leslie discloses the fitting being held in place in its contact position on then lightweight panel via a ring flange (#42), the ring flange being slid over the end of the fitting that protrudes through the opening (best seen in figure 3)

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and is supported at the edge of the opening against the side surface of the lightweight panel that faces the support arrangement (best seen in figures 2, 4).

In regards to claims 15 and 17, Leslie discloses a passenger vehicle assembly comprising a plurality of planar lightweight panels (#14, 16, 18) of multi-wall sandwich honeycomb construction connected together to form a passenger space section bounded by the panels, one of the panels having an opening (#30) with a predetermined shape and size and a fitting (#40, 60) operable to support a vehicle device, the fitting being carried by the panel. The fitting has a flange (#50, 66) adjacent an insertion portion (#48, 68) with a predetermined shape and size corresponding to the opening in the panel to accommodate insertion of the fitting in the opening with the flange limiting the insertion movement of the fitting and forming a support surface for fixing the fitting to the panel (best seen in figures 2, 4).

In regards to claim 20, Leslie discloses the flange (#50, 66) being operable to reinforce the panel (#18) around the opening (#30). Specifically, the location of the flange against the panel acts to reinforce the panel around the opening.

5. Claims 1, 12, 13, 17, 23, and 24 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Decker (4,371,743). In regards to claim 1, Decker discloses a vehicle support structure comprised primarily of multi-walled lightweight panels (#24, 26, additional panels not shown) having plane-parallel side surfaces (not labeled) with at least one fitting (#30) mountable on the support structure. An opening (#28) is cut out of a lightweight panel in the support structure, the opening being designated for a

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specific fitting (best seen in figure 1). The fitting can be inserted into this opening such that it covers the opening completely (best seen in figure 2) and a support arrangement (#32, 38) on the fitting operates in conjunction with an edge of the opening in the lightweight panel to limit insertion of the fitting (best seen in figure 2).

In regards to claims 12 and 23, Decker discloses the fitting being a housing for electrical components (fuse block #36, terminal cavities #60, fuses #62).

In regards to claims 13 and 24, Decker discloses the components being connected via electrical lines, which are held in hollow channels in the lightweight panel that is assigned to the fitting (column 2, line 55-column 3, line 17).

In regards to claim 17, Decker discloses a method of making a passenger vehicle assembly comprising providing a plurality of planar lightweight panels (#24, 26, additional panels not shown) of multi-wall sandwich honeycomb construction connected together to form a passenger space section bounded by the panels, providing a through opening (#28) in one of the panels, providing a fitting (#30) operable to support a vehicle device, the fitting including a planar flange section (#32, 38) and an insertion section (#36) protruding from one side of the planar flange section and having a shape and size corresponding to the through opening, and attaching the fitting to one of the panels by inserting the insertion section into the through opening with the flange attaching a planar surface of the panel and then fixing the flange and planar surface together (best seen in figures 1-3).

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

6. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

7. Claims 10 and 21 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Seyler (4,700,981) in view of Tetens (2,186,277). In regards to claims 10 and 21, Seyler does not disclose that the fitting is a subassembly with a pedal. Tetens teaches a vehicle support structure comprised of lightweight panels (#4, 6) with a fitting (#30) mountable on the support structure, wherein an opening is designed for a specific fitting (column 2, lines 17-22). The fitting can be inserted into the opening such that it covers the opening completely (best seen in figure 1) and a support arrangement (#36, 40, 44, 46) on the fitting operates in conjunction with an edge of the opening in the panel to limit insertion of the fitting (best seen in figure 1). The fitting is a subassembly with a pedal (#22). It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time that the invention was made to modify the fitting of Seyler such that it comprised a subassembly with a pedal as claimed in view of the teachings of Tetens so as to improve the seal around a pedal in an automotive vehicle and prevent air or dust particles from passing into the vehicle (Tetens: column 1, lines 1-6; column 3, lines 18-20).

8. Claims 11, 14, 22, and 25 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Seyler (4,700,981) in view of Simonetti (5,813,288). In regards to

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claims 11, 14, 22, and 25, Seyler does not disclose that the fitting is a steering console or an insertion module for a windshield wiper assembly. Simonetti teaches a vehicle support structure comprised of lightweight panels (#24 and others not shown) with a fitting (#30) mountable on the support structure, wherein an opening (#22) is designed for a specific fitting (column 2, lines 18-27). The fitting can be inserted into the opening such that it covers the opening completely (best seen in figures 1, 2) and a support arrangement (#30, 46) on the fitting operates in conjunction with an edge of the opening in the panel to limit insertion of the fitting (best seen in figures 2, 11). The fitting is a steering console and an insertion module for a windshield wiper assembly (column 2, lines 18-27). It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time that the invention was made to modify the fitting of Seyler such that it comprised a steering console and an insertion module for a windshield wiper assembly as claimed in view of the teachings of Simonetti so as to close the opening around the steering column in a way that is aesthetically pleasing and will not interfere with full travel and tilt of the steering column (Simonetti: column 1, lines 9-15).

Conclusion

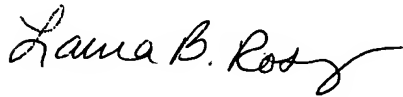
9. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure. Lampman et al., Paton, McClelland, Lenning, Bryant, Jr., Long et al., Galubensky et al., Cozzani, Beck et al., Lindberg et al., Dauvergne, Scott et al., Nakanishi et al., Watanabe et al., Taniguchi et al., Sasaki, Oyama, and Kaisaku et al. disclose vehicle support plug structures.

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Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Laura B Rosenberg whose telephone number is (703) 305-3135. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Thursday, alternating Fridays 7:30am-5:00pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Paul Dickson can be reached at (703) 308-2089. The fax phone numbers for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned are (703) 872-9326 for regular communications and (703) 872-9327 for After Final communications.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is (703) 308-1113.



LBR
May 15, 2003



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